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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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HOUSING RESEARCH

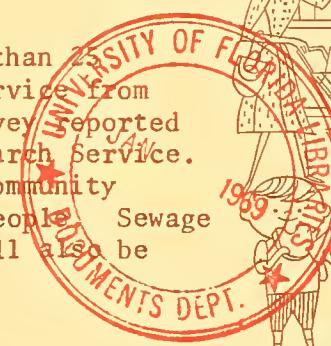
Low-Cost Housing. A house for under \$7,000? It can and will be done--housing research engineers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Products Laboratory have designed houses for low-income rural families which can be built for under \$7,000. The Forest Service is preparing plans for five models to provide for families with up to 12 children. The houses are to be built under the Housing Act of 1968. The houses will have insulation, central heat and indoor plumbing; but no frills. Economies have been effected in size, kinds of materials used, and construction. Houses will be structurally sound and durable and meet FHA requirements. More information on the house designs is available from the U.S. Forest Products Laboratory, N. Walnut Street, Madison, Wis. 53705.

NO MAN'S LAND

Without Water? Almost 35,000 communities (with more than 25 inhabitants) representing 40 million people lacked service from privately or publicly owned water facilities in a survey reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. Federal assistance programs are underway to provide community water systems for an estimated 1.5 million of these people. Sewage disposal facilities for more than 2 million people will also be provided.

LOOKING AHEAD

Market Basket In First Half 1969. Retail prices for many fruits and processed vegetables are expected to average below 1968 levels, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture economists. Potato prices, however, are likely to be above the '68 levels. Beef retail prices will probably be stable and pork products lower. In the sweet tooth department--prices for candy and confectionery and soft drinks likely will continue to rise. The March issue of SERVICE will be devoted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 46th National Outlook Conference scheduled for February 17-20 which will give special emphasis to the general agricultural economic situation.



THE POP CROP

Pop-It-Yourself People. Who are they? Mr. and Mrs. Consumer who prefer to process kernels in bags, bulk or cans and prepare "homemade" popcorn--they're "Pop-it-yourself" people. They pop their own. Five hundred million pounds of popcorn-on-the-cob, is the current yearly demand according to U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers. Popped, it would be enough to supply about a quart a year for everybody. The farmer's average yield per acre hit a record 2,546 pounds last year--nearly double what it was 20 years ago. Moviegoers are the best customers for popcorn--then baseball fans and TV watchers are next. Yellow and white varieties have the same caloric and nutritive value as sweet corn.

NEW YEAR PLENTIFULS

Post-Holiday Menu Planning? "It's Happy Time" for citrus fruit fanciers--fresh oranges are now plentiful and a 49 percent greater crop than last season is forecast. Grapefruit, canned grapefruit juice and tangerines are high on the list of nutritious foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plentiful Foods List. Canned tomatoes and tomato products will be available in excess of normal demands. Other foods in good supply include potatoes, onions, broiler-fryers and dry beans. Dry beans are estimated at 14 percent more production than last season including all varieties: pea beans, pintos, blackeyes, and lima beans.

EGGS IN YOUR MENU?

January Is Being Heralded As Egg Month. Don't forget...eggs can be the whole of... or the interesting part of your menu. Ever try tangerine chiffon pie? How about Hawaiian pie? They're known as egg desserts. Find out how to make them by getting Eggs in Family Meals, HG Bulletin No. 103 for 15 cents from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

TRAVELERS ENTRY

At The Checkout Counter. Travelers from overseas can now have their baggage checked at high-speed checkout counters--supermarket style. It's part of the customs and agricultural quarantine inspection at the John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York City. The new accelerated system is conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and three other government agencies. An inspector from one of the four agencies interrogates incoming air passengers and examines their parcels, and baggage. The new system is also being used at San Antonio's International Airport and most recently at Dulles International Airport in suburban Washington, D.C. USDA inspectors guard against the entry of plant and animal pests and diseases. Potential threats to U.S. food, forest and ornamental resources include insects and plant diseases that "hitchhike" on innocent looking fruits and vegetables.

FROM CONCRETE AND STEEL

Co-ops Are Growing. Thirty-percent of all farm products marketed are handled at some stage by co-ops according to reports by the Farmer Cooperative Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. New construction by farmer co-ops in the third quarter of 1968 is valued at 32 million dollars. This brings the total to a quarter billion dollars worth in the last 18 months--with some 85 percent in rural areas. The new construction will speed up the marketing process and increase efficiency of the operations. Co-ops give special consideration to locating new facilities in rural communities providing more jobs in rural areas.

NATIONAL - REGIONAL - STATE GROUPS

Consumer Specialist Available. What does the USDA mark of inspection mean to the consumer? Is the purple dye used for marking harmful? When you broil or fry chicken, why is the meat around the bone sometimes dark? These and many other questions may be answered by Miss Sara Beck of USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service, as she reaches consumers by way of national, regional, and state meetings and conventions, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Areas in her presentation include:

- * Packaging and labeling of meat and poultry--how to read labels.
- * Buying and using meat and poultry--how to select for economy.
- * Tips on indoor and outdoor cookery of beef, veal, pork, lamb variety meats, sausage, cured products, chicken and turkey.
- * Ways to keep meat and poultry products safe for eating between the time you buy and serve them.

Would you like to have Miss Sara Beck on your program? Write to the Information Division, Consumer and Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 with your requests

AT THE SUPERMARKET

That Hidden Fifth. Maybe you wear it, read it, listen to it, clean with it or cook on it. But--you don't eat--because it isn't food that adds the extra fifth to the average grocery bill according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers. You buy laundry soap, insecticides, children's socks, potted plants, paper towels, hi-fi records, and even multi-volume encyclopedias. Half of the aspirin, toothpaste and hair spray is sold in the supermarket. That's twenty cents out of every "food" dollar that doesn't look like, taste like or smell like food. In fact, it isn't.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Where Away? Wondering where to go to get away from it all on your next vacation? "Take the nearest road to the National Forests for perfect recreation," says the USDA's Forest Service in its newly revised publication National Forest Vacations. Within a day's drive of almost any point in the contiguous United States you can find a National Forest vacation spot awaiting. The 154 National Forests, spread over more than 182 million acres, are as diverse as the country's geography--and so are the outdoor recreation opportunities on these public lands. Skiing, hiking, picnicking, hunting, swimming and boating, backpacking--these and many more forms of recreation can be found in "America's Playgrounds." National Forest Vacations, besides summarizing outdoor recreation opportunities, has a brief guide to attractions and facilities on all the National Forests throughout the nation. A copy may be obtained for 45 cents by writing to the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

Bug Bomb on Target. And that means "doing in" those damaging, annoying home bugs, without endangering yourself or your family. A new illustrated pamphlet, "Pesticide Safety in Your Home," issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, tells the housewife and homeowner how to combine effectiveness with safety in combatting ants, clothes moths, cockroaches, pantry pests, and other insect invaders of the kitchen, and closet, basement and living room. Pesticide surface and space sprays can be highly effective, but they must be handled with care and caution to avoid accidents. This handy, easy-to-read pamphlet provides safe use information on purchase, storage, application, and disposal of home-type pesticides and their containers, as well as a table listing common household pests, what to use against them, and where and how to use it. Single copies can be obtained free on postcard request to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Companion Along the Trail. Refreshing though it is, outdoor recreation calls for outdoor safety tips because it can be hazardous, whether it's a backpack trip into wilderness country or an afternoon's hike. Outdoor Safety Tips, a new publication issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, might just become a prerequisite to safety and expertise in the out-of-doors. Designed to fit in your pocket, Outdoor Safety Tips provides guidance for routine excursions and answers for many problems that might arise en route. There are tips on what to do when lost; suggestions for dealing with sudden changes of weather; advice on seeking safe food; drinking water and shelter, and basic first aid instructions for possible accidents or illness. This well-illustrated publication is available for 15 cents from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

EDITORS

Please Note. Items used in SERVICE usually have some time element. Offer USDA publications and information listed in SERVICE as soon as possible. Or, the publications may be out-of-print or not available. Check with us before listing if in doubt.

PLANNING A NEW HOME?

Want More Storage? A second living room? Maybe a kitchen-family room would suit your family? The U.S. Department of Agriculture has just released three new slide sets and filmstrips in their housing series, bringing the total of presentations in this group to ten. Families who plan to build or remodel, carpenters, builders, home economics teachers--all who are interested in housing--will find the new slide sets and filmstrips on housing to be a valuable aid. The new housing series consists of information on bathrooms, kitchens, exterior materials for homes. Additional sets are available on interior materials, heating and cooling, wiring and basic construction plans. Club groups may view the series for constructive ideas on improving their own homes and housing projects. A list of the slide sets available may be obtained by writing to the Photography Division, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Order filmstrips from the Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011. The cost is \$5.50 each.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Shirley E. Wagener, Editor of SERVICE, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Special Reports Division, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include your zip code.